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The Commonweal

March 9, 1951

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China: Nation or Satellite?

HAROLD C. HINTON

RADIO IN BRITAIN

Beveridge and the BBC

DONALD ATTWATER

Koestler's Longing and Despair

MAX FISCHER

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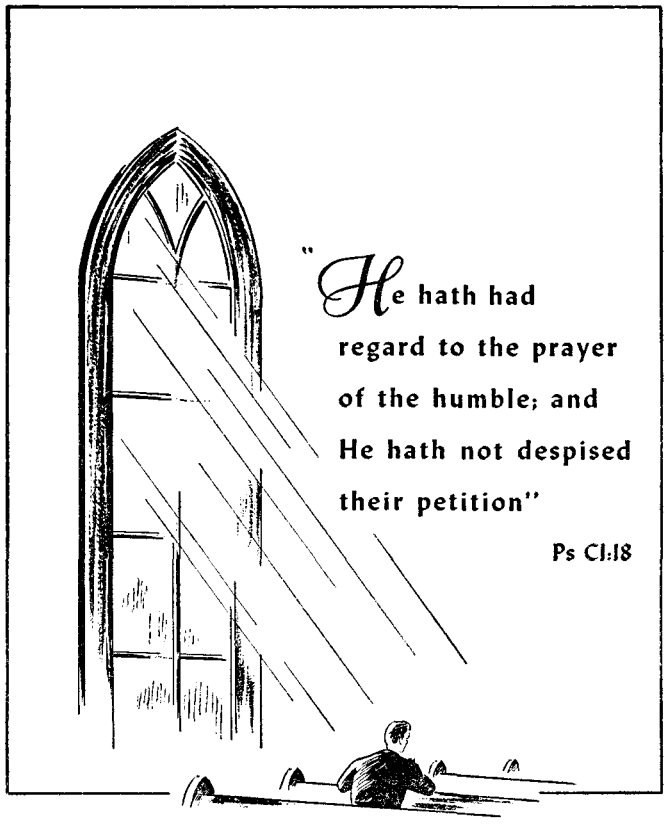

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

God Wills It?

IN A LETTER to *Le Figaro Littéraire* of Paris, which reprinted Waldemar Gurian's Open Letter to Etienne Gilson from the December 15 issue of THE COMMONWEAL, M. Gilson writes: "Why this letter [Gurian's]? It is very simple. It is part of a campaign undertaken by a group in the United States, happily limited but venomous, to defame any fairly well-known Catholic who does not hold that war against Russia is a sacred duty, in the strictly religious sense of the word. Since 'God wills it,' the more politics tends to make this war inevitable, so much more Christian is the politics."

It seems hardly credible to us that anyone who has read THE COMMONWEAL at all carefully, and especially the thoughtful contributions of Waldemar Gurian, could have reached such a conclusion.

In the October 13 issue, Dr. Gurian wrote on the question: Can We Avoid World War III?—

> Can war be avoided? Unfortunately the answer does not depend exclusively on decisions made here in the United States. Nevertheless there is hope of peace if we avoid bringing about a situation that leaves no retreat open for the Soviet leaders. We must act knowing that principles in politics have to be applied with prudence.

In the September 8 issue we ran an editorial on Secretary Matthews aggression-for-peace proposal:

> Avoiding World War III has been the prize above all others that we hoped to win from the cold war. It has been the goal, the great political objective, the thing all the shouting has been about. The aggressive policy suggested by Mr. Matthews would be a sad reversal. . . . It would be the beginning of the end.

These are two random quotes taken from the writings of Dr. Gurian and COMMONWEAL editorials. There are many more like them. But they are enough to give the lie to M. Gilson's unfounded charge.

Let us spell out, for the benefit of those pacifists, isolationists and visiting neutralists who have taken an interest in our editorial policy, just where we stand on the question of war.

1. We do not think war is a sacred duty in the sense of a crusade. We do believe that times come when it may be a moral duty for a nation or the family of nations to go to war to resist aggression. We have never at any time urged any such move against Russia.

2. We do not believe that war is inevitable, and we deem it the duty of political leaders to do everything honorably possible to avoid World War III.

3. We believe in Western preparedness, first because nations have a right and a duty to defend themselves against an aggressive force; second, because we believe that the only hope of warding off further aggression is for the non-Communist powers to be ready to resist it.

4. We do not believe that God wills war in any but a permissive sense, since war is an evil. Nor do we believe that religion can be served by war, or peace be made by war (except in the sense that victory may produce a climate in which peacemaking is possible), or that ideas can be destroyed by the bullets and bombs of war. We do believe that Communism as an ideological force —the culmination of the secularist, materialist disease in the world—can be finally overcome only by the re-Christianization, re-spiritualization of the world, and we know that will not be done by armies.

5. We reject pacifism, mainly on theological grounds, and isolationism, because it leads to war, and neutralism, because it is impossible.

6. We support the Atlantic Pact, the arming of the West, etc., not because we think that we must use these means to save the Church but because we are citizens and see them as necessary

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for the defense of the nation and the family of free nations. The Church has her own weapons for resisting evil, and they do not include the weapons of war. The state has a duty to resist physical aggression and must by the nature of things rely heavily on the threat of force.

We are aware that there are many who disagree with several or all of these points. But we must insist on not being burdened with beliefs that we do not hold.

Negotiating with Russia

IT TAKES more than the posed smiles and official handshakes that find their way into the papers and the newsreels to constitute a conference of foreign ministers that is worth convoking. What we want from Russia is tangible results. Terms that the Big Four could agree on are hard to conceive. Current Russian notes on the subject show little change of front; there exists no real basis for agreement. Russian statistics on respective armed forces indicate a wide divergence even as to the starting point of facts.

When it comes to objectives, they are still the same. The USSR wants to dominate, if not conquer, the world; the Atlantic nations are, in varying degrees, determined to prevent that. Moreover, we no longer have faith in Russian promises.

Despite all this the United States should have no hesitation in welcoming a convening of the Big Four's foreign ministers. Discussion on Germany (proposed by Stalin) is all to the good, and the more the agenda can be expanded the better. In any case much is to be gained indirectly from such a conference.

There is no longer the danger that such a meeting would be exploited by Russia to eat up valuable time while she embarked on new political adventures. Her ambitions are well-known. The USSR is not in the position she once was to exact concessions. As far as this country is concerned the days for appeasement are over. And we would go into such a conference with our eyes open.

In the area of propaganda a Big Four meeting would seem to afford the Western nations the better chance. Such Russian catch-phrases as "peace-loving," "liberation," "democracy," and "the will of the people" would have to give way before specific proposals in concrete terms. Soviet aims would appear, not in misleading generalities, but in specific and bold terms, for all to see. Observers have noted that Russian intransigence at such conferences is invaluable in drawing the United States and the other Soviet adversaries together.

Germany itself presents a special problem. Here Russian propaganda in favor of demilitarization and unification is having some effect in the Western Zones. That should provoke Britain, France and the United States to have another plan in readiness—something they should draw up anyway. It is indeed possible to conceive of a plan which would provide for gradual demilitarization and eventual unification of Germany on a prudent basis. And there should indeed be a Western formula on every major issue—at the very least for purposes of comparison with Soviet proposals.

Once the Western nations were forced to negotiate from weakness. Increasingly we shall be negotiating from positions of comparative strength. Time appears to be on our side. To encourage conferences of this sort is one of the things the American people can do to put off a war that may never materialize after the two great states reach a power balance.

There is a proverbial connection between negotiations and peace. Even with an aggressive USSR small areas of agreement may be found. Perhaps such a conference might mark the beginning of certain local disarmament. These meetings might very well be in session at the moment the Korean war reaches a stage that is ripe for settlement. If the agenda were duly expanded, the Big Four could then hasten the conclusion of Korean bloodshed and devastation.

For all these reasons a meeting of the foreign ministers is greatly to be desired even though right now it promises so little in the way of

• NEXT WEEK •

GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN tells of recent defections from the Italian Communist Party and what they mean for the defense of the West.

Mr. Kumlien finds that these deviationists still oppose the Atlantic Pact and "American Imperialism" quite as much as the Communists of the Cominform. One of them said: "We are willing to defend our country even against the Russians but only if it is a Communist Italy."

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mutually acceptable agreements. Such a conference could not but advance solution of the German question, the defense of the West and the cause of peace.

Bases in Morocco

PRELIMINARIES to the establishment of seven large American air bases on and near the Atlantic coast of Morocco have disclosed new difficulties between France and her colonial empire. Morocco is a French Protectorate whose elected Sultan has been giving such signs of restiveness that Alphonse-Pierre Juin, the French Resident-General, subjected him to a series of firm demands. The General even refused Air Secretary Finletter permission to visit the Sultan on his recent swing around the Mediterranean and the Near East.

Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Youssef, who came to power in 1927, has long been a moderate, friendly to France. During a recent visit to Paris he did speak up for long overdue changes in the status of the Morocco protectorate. He later refused to sign two French decrees that would have reorganized the local judiciary and the labor unions. (Independent Moroccan unions are not now permitted; unions are affiliated with the Communist-dominated French CGT). The Sultan and his political supporters themselves were accused of sympathy with Communism. Moreover, the Berbers in his country have recently been stirred up against the Arabs, one of the worst of colonial crimes. Above all Morocco continues to be held fast in its colonial chains.

The dispute is not about the air bases themselves, which are to be a Franco-American project. (The Sultan had already agreed to that, some say under considerable pressure.) But the arrival of the Americans raised certain native hopes of presenting the Moroccan case to sympathetic ears.

Under pressure from the mother country this hope has now faded considerably. The Sultan has backed down and dissolved his personal cabinet, which was nationalist in sentiment. He has agreed to denounce the ultra-nationalist Istiqlal Party and to approve some forty French-sponsored reform decrees. He has also issued a personal statement acknowledging the progress Morocco has made with the help of the French Republic.

One of the motives for his acquiescence was a firm note from the French Government indicating that it fully backed General Juin's demands. Another was local demonstrations against the Istiqlal Party, which indicate that to a certain extent the people of Morocco are divided. But at best this would seem to be a temporary victory for the French and one which merely postpones the solution of an urgent colonial problem. It is difficult to see how such a show of force, any more than a successful defense of Indo-China against its local Communists, would provide a lasting answer for peoples who are bent on throwing off their colonial status.

The French people themselves are concerned about this matter. *Témoignage Chrétien* says: "Unilateral revision of the protectorate treaty is not possible. But France could agree to study the question in an inter-governmental conference that would be broadly representative. Certain people, such as the Sultan, hold that revision is indispensable and, as we have seen, there is some justification for this view."

Road to Emotional Independence

THE "democratic home," so we have just been told, is ideal for the upbringing of the child. The headline of the article at hand leads to startling speculations about children's conduct decided by majority vote, equalization of authority among all members of the household, and the jettisoning of the ancient tradition of filial obedience.

The occasion for this news-story was the annual meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development. The substance of what one good doctor (and his research staff) recommended to the meeting was not so drastic as the headline of the story indicated; the doctor recommended that mothers should readily answer their children's questions, give reasons for restrictions when asked and generally show themselves to be affectionate and interested. The effect of all this was contrasted with the emotional maladjustments resulting from the actions of parents who are autocratically coercive. These sensible conclusions were substantiated by impressive statistics which had been compiled under good laboratory conditions.

What the headline did reveal is the extent to which Americans have come to equate the terms "democracy" and "virtue." That is a tribute to our bitterly-attacked political ideals. It is also

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a sign of the human tendency to unify and oversimplify. Happily it does not mean that child-experts are advocating the abandonment of one of the chief, if not the pleasantest, parental functions.

Alienation of Affections

FOR some time the Left Wing members of the British Labor Party, who like to pride themselves on taking their socialism straight and doctrinaire, have been concentrating a sharp and steady fire on the more moderate Attlee Laborites. A good deal of the shooting has been about foreign policy. The Attlee policy of staying on close terms with the United States has been, in the opinion of the Left Wingers, altogether too close and chummy, with the result that it has aggravated the Russians and deepened the East-West split, all of which leaves the Left Wingers with an uneasy feeling at the bottom of their stomachs. What, they ask themselves, is going to become of socialist doctrine if Britain conducts herself as the arch accomplice of the leading capitalist power in the world? After all, it is still good socialist doctrine that capitalism thrives on competitiveness and competitiveness for world markets leads to world wars. So it has been only grudgingly that most of the Left Wingers have demurred from open friendship with the Soviet Union (at one time referred to as the socialist Fatherland) whose aggressive foreign policy the British Left Wingers have also found so hard to stomach that they have been for the most part disabused of the notion that the Soviet Union can be the brotherly ally of truly peaceful socialist states.

Even so, though, the Left Wingers continue to hang back, reluctant to make the choice the Attlee Laborites have made in energetically opposing the Soviet Union. This state of affairs has led the London *Catholic Herald* to comment that "a careful study of the editorial and correspondence columns of the *New Statesman* [a journal expressing the views of the Left Wingers] is well worth making. Through them a single theme seems to run, namely that in the last resort, it will be far better for this country to be occupied by the forces of Moscow than to take any action at present which might precipitate war. . . . The circumstances are such today that one is forced to ask oneself whether something very like a preference for Communism (under the nomenclature of full socialism) to our traditional democracy does not lie somewhere at the back of the mind of those who take the attitude we have described."

It is, to say the least, a complex and confusing situation the Labor Party has on its hands and it is one made to order for the Soviets, who have, of course, a carefully cultivated genius for sowing the seeds of discord wherever doubt opens the ground. Toward the end of dividing the leadership of the Labor Party and dividing the present leaders of the Party from their popular support, the Russians have been conducting in public a long-winded diplomatic exchange of notes with the British, in which the Soviets, in a hurt voice, complain that whereas "the peoples of the USSR on their part cherished and continue to cherish feelings of friendship for, and gratitude to, the British people," the present leaders have "slandered" the USSR and have, in general, behaved themselves badly, as though they had some reason to doubt the fact that "the Soviet Union continues firmly to adhere to its peace-loving stand." These notes are, in a way, a rather clumsy attempt to embarrass the Attlee faction of the Labor Party and to divide Britain from the United States on the eve of the Four Power foreign ministers conference, but for all their heavy-handedness they are bound to have a certain effect, given the troubled state of the Left Wing Laborite mind.

In the long run it is a good thing, it seems to us, that the Labor Party and the British people are involved now in a great debate of their own, because in the end the Attlee policy must emerge in the public mind as the only sound one to pursue. It is neither a policy of appeasement nor of bull-headed refusal to negotiate East-West differences, and as such it is essentially the same as our own policy, even though there are disagreements between the British and the Americans on some matters, as there will always be between free peoples.

There are those in this country who, in a blind bias against socialism and all socialists, have been unwilling to accord the great majority of the British Labor Party the respect and understanding they deserve. Actually those Americans who recklessly brand all British Labor as pro-Communist are unwittingly undermining British-American relations and the foundations of our security. This tone of wild criticism cannot prevail, we are sure, either here or in Great Britain, to the extent of its constituting grounds for divorce through that alienation of British-American affections that the Russians are so diligently preparing the way for.

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China: Nation or Satellite?

The Communist Government faces a choice of partnership, rivalry or slavery.

By HAROLD C. HINTON

THE purpose of this article is to examine, with respect to China, the validity of the common view that no nation in which the Communist Party has seized power is capable of pursuing any foreign or domestic policy which is not prescribed by the Kremlin. I believe this notion to be an oversimplification; a good argument can be made out for it in the case of the satellites of Eastern Europe, but even here the defection of Tito and the apparently growing number of his sympathizers in other Communist parties show how dangerous such a generalization is.

In Asia it is even more dangerous, for the peoples of the Far East are striving for political and economic independence—a struggle which antedates the birth of the Soviet Union, and one which the Soviet leaders have exploited but did not bring into being. It hardly seems likely that the peoples of Asia would knowingly and willingly exchange the yoke of the Western powers for the far heavier one of Soviet Russia. It is possible, of course, that they may be misled into accepting it by Communist leaders posing as genuine nationalists.

Is this what has actually happened in China? Secretary Acheson apparently believes that it is, for he wrote in his introduction to the White Paper that

> The heart of China is in Communist hands. The Communist leaders have foresworn their Chinese heritage and have publicly announced their subservience to a foreign power, Russia, which during the last 50 years, under czars and Communists alike, has been most assiduous in its efforts to extend its control in the Far East. In the recent past, attempts at foreign domination have appeared quite clearly to the Chinese people as external aggression and as such have been bitterly and in the long run successfully resisted. Our aid and encouragement have helped them to resist. In this case, however, the foreign domination has been masked behind the façade of a vast crusading movement which apparently has seemed to many Chinese to be wholly indigenous and national. Under these circumstances, our aid has been unavailing.

This, of course, is what supporters of Chiang Kai-shek, and conservative-minded political thinkers generally, would like us to believe, but is it the truth? Let us look at the record, as a distinguished American once said, or at least as much of the record as can be reviewed here.

The record clearly shows that the Chinese Communist movement arose out of a consciousness on the part of certain intellectuals that a remedy must be found for China's disunity and weakness, and for her appalling poverty; that most of the Chinese Communist leaders have never studied in Moscow; and that the position which they had gained by the end of the Second World War was in no way due to direct Russian support or intervention. From 1945 to 1949, proven Russian aid to the Chinese Communists amounted to the abandonment, by the Soviet Army in Manchuria, of stocks of captured Japanese weapons, in places where the Chinese Reds could gather them up, and to the evacuation of Manchuria on a timetable calculated to give the latter the best possible chance of gaining control over the rural areas while Nationalist forces with American help were occupying the main cities and railroads.

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THIS brief summary of a complex historical process, however, still does not answer the question as to whether Communist China is at the present time an independent nation or a satellite after the manner of Bulgaria or Rumania. In order to prove that it is a satellite, one must prove not only the similarity of the political organization of Soviet Russia and Communist China, but the subordination of the latter to the former.

Certain points of structural similarity can be easily established. The Organic Law of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China defines the republic as follows:

> *Article* 1. The People's Republic of China is a state of the people's democratic dictatorship, led

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by the working class, based on the alliance of workers and peasants, and uniting all democratic classes and the various nationalities within the country.

Article 2. The Government of the People's Republic of China is a government of the people's congress system based on the principle of democratic centralism [a standard Communist term].

The Soviet constitution of 1936, which is still in force, begins thus:

Article 1. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants.

Article 3. In the USSR all power belongs to the working people of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Working People's Deputies.

The similarities are obvious, but there is one important difference between the structure of the two countries—important, that is, in terms of Marxist theory. The Soviet Union is considered by its rulers and admirers to have achieved a classless society, and should accordingly be emerging from the stage of proletarian dictatorship and approaching that of pure communism. China, on the other hand, has not yet undergone a proletarian dictatorship, and its structure is supposed to be based not on an absence of classes but on a coalition of all "democratic" classes. This is a point of Marxian political theory which deserves to be understood, even though its practical effect may seem slight.

Soviets, or popular assemblies, arose in Russia before the triumph of the Bolsheviks, and have been used by the latter to provide a semblance of democracy in a country governed in reality by a hierarchy of Communist Party organs. In China, on the other hand, the establishment of local assemblies has generally followed, not preceded, the arrival of Communist troops. Accordingly, local administration in China is far more military in character than it ever was in the Soviet Union. Many of the highest party leaders are primarily soldiers, and most of the country is still divided into six regional governments administered largely by field commanders; in only one, Manchuria, has a genuinely civilian government been established.

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AT THE time of the Revolution of 1917, peasants already owned most of the agricultural land in Russia, and they soon took control over what little still remained in the hands of nobles and landlords. The Chinese Communists, however, found a substantial fraction of China's overcrowded agricultural land, especially in the south, owned by landlords and worked by tenants. The practical effect of this difference in agrarian conditions has been that whereas, after a decade of watchful waiting, the Soviet government was able to proceed with the collectivization of agriculture, in China the Communists have first felt compelled to wipe out the landlord class and distribute its land among the peasants. They have so far attempted collectivization only in Manchuria, where the agrarian situation more closely resembled that in pre-revolutionary Russia than was the case farther south, and even there only on a limited scale.

In March 1949 the Chinese Communists proclaimed their main task for the future to be industrialization and urban development. In the accomplishment of this task they have promised to permit cooperative and private, as well as state-owned, enterprises, to play a part. It was not until the spring of 1921 that Lenin realized the wisdom of such a policy for Russia, and Stalin reversed it in 1928 in favor of a drastic drive toward thorough-going socialism.

The Chinese Communists, in other words, are proceeding more cautiously in their internal economic policies than their Russian prototypes did. Their caution is due probably both to an appreciation of the latter's mistakes and to the greater seriousness of China's economic problems.

In the religious and cultural spheres, there appear to be no significant differences between the two regimes. There has been somewhat less outright persecution and regimentation in China than in Russia, but the Chinese leaders are trying to "nationalize" both the Catholic and Protestant clergy and to promote a schismatic movement among the former. Chinese authors follow the party line almost as closely (though perhaps with more genuine enthusiasm) in China as in the Soviet Union.

Similarity, then, can easily be proved, but what about subordination? It is here that we leave the sphere of domestic policy and enter the even thornier one of foreign relations. Superficially, there is much evidence to support the view that China's foreign policies are dictated by the Soviet Union. On May Day in 1950, the Chinese Communist Party urged the people to "Support the world camp of peace and democracy, headed by the Soviet Union! Long live Soviet friendship, alliance, and mutual assistance! Long live the unity of China and all the people's democracies!" Communist China has never protested officially against the removal of industrial installations from Manchuria by the Soviet Army during the winter of 1945-1946. A commercial treaty signed in 1949 bound the Manchurian authorities to ship grain to the Soviet Union in exchange for manufactured goods. On February 14, 1950, the two countries signed a treaty of defensive alliance, directed nominally against Japan but in reality against the United States.

Thousands of Russian advisers have actually en-

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tered the Chinese armed forces, bureaucracy, and industrial system. A joint Sino-Soviet company, possibly modeled on the concerns which have been milking Eastern Europe for the benefit of the Soviet economy, is said to be at work in Sinkiang. China has consistently followed the Soviet line in international affairs. Russian-built jet fighters have appeared over Korea, T-34 tanks have been seen in the streets of Peking, and four Soviet divisions are reported by the frequently unreliable Nationalist authorities on Formosa to have entered Chinese territory; a Sino-Russian headquarters is said to have been established in Manchuria to direct operations in Korea. The Soviet government has just announced the return of seventy-five industrial installations in Manchuria to Chinese control, revealing thereby a greater degree of Russian influence in Manchuria than had been generally realized. Mao Tse-tung has recently been reported to be considering another mission to Moscow.

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INDICATIONS such as these argue strongly in favor of the thesis that Red China is a satellite revolving in a regular orbit around the planet Moscow, but there is some countervailing evidence. The Yugoslav government, which should understand, better than any other outside the Iron Curtain, the workings of Communist international politics, appears to believe that the Soviet leaders have been seriously disturbed over the defeat of their relatively weak and compliant North Korean satellites and the possibly undesired entry into the Korean war of the far more powerful and independently minded Chinese. We can only guess what the official Russian attitude is toward the terrible losses which the Chinese armies have suffered in Korea from cold, typhus, and superior firepower, but it may well be one of secret satisfaction. Indeed, all along the Sino-Soviet border, the longest land frontier in the world, there exist areas of actual or potential Sino-Soviet conflict — Korea, Manchuria, Mongolia, Sinkiang, Tibet, India itself. Most of these areas inhabited by races neither Chinese nor Russian by blood, have for centuries been an arena of struggle between Russian and Chinese imperialism, and there is no necessary reason for supposing that the communization of both the adversaries will alter the historic trends of Asian power politics. I would suggest that Mao Tse-tung may well aspire to become an Oriental Stalin, directing revolutionary movements in Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Korea, and perhaps India and Japan, while of course leaving to his senior partner a similar position with regard to the rest of the world. If that is the case, I would also suggest that this ambition must be highly displeasing to Stalin. On the statesmanship of these two men and their respective governments hangs the answer to the question of whether the mutual relationship of Russia and China will be one of partnership, rivalry, or master and slave.

My views on this matter are substantially the same as those of Benjamin Schwartz, a member of the Russian Research Center at Harvard and one of the ablest American students of Chinese Communism. Mr. Schwartz has expressed his opinion as follows:

> **Finally, what is to be said on the crucial question** of the relations of the Chinese Communist Party to Moscow? Here, of course, we are on slippery ground and all we can hope to do is weigh the importance of various factors. We now know, from the experience of Yugoslavia, that a common Marxist-Leninist philosophy, even a common devotion to Stalinist techniques is no guarantee of loyalty. The latter factor, on the contrary, with its emphasis on the possibility of socialism in one country may actually be a divisive factor. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that Mao's rise to power in China was the result of his own efforts. It should also be pointed out that since 1930 the Chinese Communist Party has borne at least some of the responsibility of government; that it has had to make spot decisions based on a knowledge of local conditions and that in its governing capacity it has developed policies and practices which are in marked contrast to the policies and practices of the Soviet Union. In the light of these factors, considerations of the psychology of power would suggest that the present leadership of the Chinese Communist Party would not willingly submit to the dictation of the Kremlin. On the other side, however, we have the incontrovertible fact that nowhere, in the whole body of official Chinese Communist literature from 1930 until yesterday, do we find one word derogatory to the Soviet Union or critical of its policies. In spite of this immensely important fact, however, I would venture to guess that *in the eventuality of a clash of interests between the Soviet Union and a Chinese Communist regime,* the Chinese Communist regime would pursue its own interests. It is, of course, possible that a clever policy on the part of the Kremlin may forestall such an eventuality for some time to come.

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THERE can be no definite answer at present to the question of whether Communist China is an independent nation or a Soviet satellite. An examination of the available evidence, however, seems to point to the conclusion that Mao Tse-tung will in all probability attempt to maintain a position midway between the abject groveling of a Rakosi and the proud defiance of a Tito, and that China's size, population, potential power, and growing nationalism may enable him to be successful.

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FROM ENGLAND

Beveridge and the BBC

I HAVE from time to time found it difficult to persuade some Americans that radio in Great Britain is not nationalized, in the sense of being a monopoly operated by and for the government—just as some Americans seem unable to believe that a peerage does not carry with it a salary from the public purse or that the medieval fortress called the Tower of London is not a royal residence. The British Broadcasting Corporation is in fact a public-service monopoly, operating under a charter from the Crown, which through the government appoints its chairman, vice-chairman and the five other governors. It is financed by license-fees, roughly £3 a year from every owner of a receiving set, and it gets a grant-in-aid from Parliament in respect of its European and Overseas services. There are no "sponsored" programs; and the administration in office cannot demand and does not get preferential treatment over the other two political parties.

The current charter of the BBC expires at the end of this year, and in view of this a committee was appointed eighteen months ago to inquire into its affairs. The chairman of this committee was Lord Beveridge (he of the "Plan"), and its members consisted of one Conservative and two Labor members of Parliament, three educationists, one industrialist, one trade-union official, one representative for Scotland, and one for Wales (who was also a Liberal M.P.). Two of these were women. The BBC itself was not represented.

The report of this committee has now been published. It is a long document, containing one hundred recommendations. About certain of them some members of the committee express reservations, and there is a minority report of one, the Conservative M.P., Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, who advocates a new set-up, to include one or two companies to run commercial programs. The report therefore displays a very considerable degree of unanimity.

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IT AGREES that the present radio set-up is the right system for this country, and it is in general a complete vindication of the work of the sometimes heavily criticized BBC. But it reminds us that the dangers attendant on a monopoly are not imaginary. The BBC is very properly animated by a sense of mission, and when such a sense is combined with security of office it may grow into an illusion of "divine right." This is well said, and it is an aspect of the situation that has worried some people for a long time. But when the report in this connection invokes the example of King Charles I as an illustration it perpetrates an irrelevance that can only provoke hoots of laughter. "The governors must be the watch-dogs against dangers of monopoly." But, the report goes on, "How are the watch-dogs to be kept awake? Who is to watch the governors?" A quinquennial report to Parliament by an independent committee is one of the measures suggested; but the most important safeguard must be the watchfulness of the "listening public." Both control by a competitive market and control by Parliament are rejected.

Among the dangers of monopoly that the report specifies is that of "Londonization," which in any case is one of the curses of this country (that reflection is mine). But that regionalism is still in some respects a live issue in Great Britain has been recently illustrated by the amusing, if rather childish, theft of the Coronation Stone from Westminster Abbey. However, while the Scottish National Party complained to the Beveridge committee that the BBC looks at the world through English eyes, the Society of St. George alleged favoritism towards Scotland and Wales. It can safely be assumed that the committee is moved by neither of these august bodies when it recommends more regionalism on the air by the development of local broadcasting, and the appointment of special radio commissions for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where the need for special treatment is intensified by the hundreds of thousands of people who prefer to listen to Welsh or Gaelic rather than English.

★

ANOTHER field where contradictory evidence was submitted to the committee was politics. Both from the Labor Party and, especially, from the Listeners' Association, speaking for the "Right," came charges of political and social bias. Of this the report says:

> So far as we have been able to examine particular cases ourselves, we have no doubt that the charges of bias made by the Listeners' Association are unjustified. At the same time, our investigations suggested cases in which, had we been governors [of the BBC] we should have felt that we ought to have been formally consulted before certain decisions as to programs were taken.

Writing as a far from inveterate but very critical radio listener, my own impression is that the BBC programs show no more "leftward" tendency than is to be expected in a country where the votes of the people have returned a Socialist party to power. And I heartily agree when the report goes on:

> The broadcasting authority of the future must be prepared to give offense by allowing small and what may often appear unreasonable minorities to express their views.

And in my opinion it is very preferable that such minorities should be given their publicity by an exercise of equity rather than by "buying air" for hard cash or

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finding a sponsor. The majority of the committee rejects the idea of any system which would meet the cost of broadcasting, wholly or in part, from payments by those wishing to advertise their goods or propagate their views.

> If the people of Great Britain want broadcasting essentially as a public service they must be prepared to pay the cost of this service directly.

But, in addition to Mr. Lloyd mentioned above, three members of the committee, including the chairman, are in favor of modifying this, to the small extent of having a "controlled and limited advertisement hour, as every newspaper has its advertising columns, without sacrificing the independence or the standards of broadcasting." Those who agree with Lord Beveridge in this are the Liberal M.P., Lady Megan Lloyd George, and the principal of a women's college, Mrs. Mary Stocks.

As the above reference to "small and . . . unreasonable minorities" suggests, the committee is in favor of more controversy on the air. It suggests the possibility of a sort of radio "Hyde Park" or "Union Square," with the necessary "policing" to keep order and a code of rules of the game—of which a ban on "imputing motives" to an individual opponent might well be one (my reflection again). Certainly the present range of BBC controversial discussion is generally pretty dull. We have recently been treated to some criticism of the broadcasts of an astronomer, Mr. Fred Hoyle: I don't know which was the more dreary, Mr. Hoyle or his Christian critics. The committee objects, and very properly objects, to the present forbiddance of radio discussion of any question within a fortnight before it is debated in Parliament. I suspect most listeners don't know of this. I certainly did not. Is it supposed that this might constitute an improper pressure on the freedom of debate in the House? Goodness me.

★

THROUGHOUT its report the committee makes clear its objectivity and independence. To the statement of the Newspaper Society that it would "view with very great concern any further extension of news broadcasting, especially in the form of extended broadcasts of regional news," the committee retorts that,

> It does not appear to us that fear of damaging the newspapers should be a reason for preventing the BBC from giving to listeners the best news service of which broadcasting is capable.

And it specifically recommends the broadcasting of more local news from regional stations.

Much of this report deals with aspects of radio outside the interest of ordinary listeners. But the rest, I feel pretty sure, will have their support and approval. There remains to be seen how much of it we shall get.

DONALD ATTWATER.

SO THEY TELL ME

The Irish and the Yankees

THE question, Where am I going to be when I am 65? is a concession to time I have refused to make. Pension systems and annuities, playfully predicting my presumed old age on the sands of Miami or in a trailer camp in lower California, carefree and guaranteed, leave me coldly hostile. It has always seemed to me that a man ought to possess more arrogance than that.

Where I come from, relief, even in old age, is a thing which is regarded as an evil, like a contracted disease, and a wilful sign that you have been morally careless. It is even regarded as a sin, an institutional practice that attacks pride. The attitude, I think, reflects prideful Irish ancestry; it is also, of course, a quick reaction of New England conscience. It stems from the irrevocable belief that you should pay your own way and never have debts. It produces the only concession that the Irish or the New England Yankee is ever willing to make to postponement: he will not buy what he cannot afford to pay for on the line. It is what Emerson called "putting off."

In the New Englander this stand against life always elicited my young admiration. In the Irish—I mean, of course, those who were born in Ireland—it baffled me. I was too young to see any similarity between the Irish and the Yankees. Partly this bafflement flowed from my denial of knowledge. For I had been brought up romantically. This meant that my conception of the Irish permanently included the ideas of adventure, defiance, hostility and bravery, which last was accompanied by carelessness. When I first read the famous Christmas dinner scene in Joyce, I was as much at home in it and unstartled as if I had been reading about Parnell who, far more than Washington or Lincoln, was the unadulterated hero of my youthful home.

★

SOMEHOW, I think, the opinions about the British that were the received part of my bringing-up—a kind of inherited pension of emotion drawn heavily on in the first World War and coloring, for many years, my judgment of Woodrow Wilson—made me instinctively ally New Englanders with them. I will never forget my mother's absolute shock when, on her taking me into the home of a veteran of the Civil War, I almost bitterly engaged in arrogant and defensive praise of Robert E. Lee. What my mother had failed to perceive was that I was drawing checks from an emotional bank which she and my father had verbally built from the time I was able to listen and remember, and in which both of them were cashiers.

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I suppose, too, that towards the British I had inherited, and moved within, deep religious bias, and that it was part of the cement I used to identify and join the native New Englanders and the English. This was so true that the idea that one could be Irish and Protestant seemed to me to be a contradiction in terms. How I fitted Parnell into this rigid and immutable scheme of things, or Wolfe Tone or Robert Emmett, for that matter, I cannot now understand or explain to myself. But that I held the two categories separate and independent—the bias and the reverence—and somehow reconcilable is clear. It is equally clear to me, at this age, that men do not live by logic nor require logic in the fashioning of historical allegiances, which have their proud and defiant origins in the blood. Actually "ideology" is an imprecise and silly word, for it gives human motivation a rigor it does not deserve.

To come from Ireland into a small New England town and to be greeted by conventional signs on houses where there were rooms to let, signs saying insistently: "No Irish need apply," was, as my father told me, to have the nature of your world sharply limited and defined. It was to live in a town in which you were verbally and vigorously set apart. It had, at least, the virtue of honesty: You knew not only that you were scorned, as if you were some leprous and dangerous thing, but you even knew why. The read word on the sign was "Irish;" the unseen word was "Roman." The result was that you trailed it spittingly, and you nourished, in public and with expressed arrogance, what, otherwise, you would have taken for granted, like fingernails or hair.

★

SINCE the very character of your birthplace, the house, the neighborhood, the whole universe of work and play, of discussion, of reading, even, were defined for you, as were the houses you were admitted to and those from which you were rejected—amidst the condemnatory language of children who regarded you with tutored alienship—since all this was so, an allegiance that was yours naturally was now enforced and studied and made deliberate and drenched in sentiment, and carried, even in the streets, with conscious bravery like a thing which was holy, like a banner which ordinarily would be kept at home, like a chip on an assumedly blessed shoulder. You remember the sentence in Joyce's "Araby": "I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes."

All this must have meant to my father—much more was implicit here than you might have inferred—more than surprise and shock. This racial and religious confinement must have been a severe setback — a defeat of expectations, horses shot out from under him, illusion torn rudely away, a flag of belief suddenly stolen and muddied and stamped on while you watched in compelled and incredible wonder.

It must have seemed, for a time, as if the British you fled from had beaten you here, and had merely chosen other weapons for their punitive exercises. You were as alien in the one country as in the other—the essential difference being that you were lonelier, and the drug of refuge through escape had lost its potency. But if you survived, your survival was accompanied by constantly kindled pride, the knowledge that you had paid your passage and earned your own way—the absolute, willed determination that you belonged to yourself, and were never, even for a fugitive moment, in mortgage to another human being. The idea that you could not take care of yourself, without aid from anyone, was as preposterous as that you would cut your throat.

But time and observation and the slow dropping away of overt hostility, the reluctant discovery on the part of the New Englander that your allegedly fierce danger was a myth, disclosed that the identification you had made, or part of it at any rate, was wrong. The New Englander had, once, been a refugee also. His expectations, though different, had been differently defeated. He, once, had been left with little save the constant appeal to his own pride in himself. He, too, had burned his fingers in the fire of illusion—though the nature both of the fire and of the burning had not been the same.

The government he had raised in conceded necessity he had been afraid of. So that the giving up of power to the governing was never a thing that could be contemplated. He was not without charity but he had a feeling that the need for aid was a visible sign of failure. The idea that work was a form of therapy never occurred to him—that it was a necessity, a duty, even, was as clear to him as was the idea that indolence was a sin.

He lived, it is true, in a world of peculiar moral ambiguities. His sense of individuality did not prevent him from exercising tyranny. If it would be harsh to call him a hypocrite, his moral travellings were often as difficult to follow as those of Gladstone or of Nehru. His record as a mill owner or as an employer is humid with the odor of oppression and personal disregard.

But history instructs us that the moral record of all men is stained, and I am not writing a defense of the character and conduct of the New England conscience.

★

WHAT I started out to say is that in some peculiar way two strains, once regarded by me as wholly and forever opposite, have found a reconciliation. It is as odd a marriage as has ever been contracted but it is more compatible than most. It is not a proof of the proposition that opposites attract, if only for the reason that all the figures which once were burning have not yet been extinguished. Nor do I think it impossible that they could not be called into life again. I am not as insane as all that.

The worst thing that James Bryce could say about Parnell was that his vanity extinguished his pride. If that were true, it was what dissociated him from the New Englander. When it was true it was in those moments that he ceased to be Irish.

FRANCIS DOWNING.

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The Stage

HIGH GROUND

CHARLOTTE HASTING'S mystery melodrama has an interesting setting and a workable plot. A police party, escorting a young woman to a prison where she will be executed for the murder of her brother, is cut off by flood waters and forced to take refuge in a convent. Here one of the nuns becomes convinced of the girl's innocence and finds herself challenged to prove it before the flood waters can recede and the party move on. The production of the play has its virtues, too: a very attractive setting by Peggy Clark, and a sound acting company headed by Margaret Webster, Leueen McGrath, and Tom Helmore.

Unluckily, both script and production have just the kind of flaws calculated to make the evening intolerable. Miss Hastings has felt it necessary to diagram each step of the action with such painful and plodding clarity as to suggest that she was hoping to reach an audience of idiot children, at one point requiring no less than four lines of dialogue to subtract the number seventeen from the number twenty-one. The pathetic astonishment with which the two nuns who are engaged in this complex mathematical operation arrive at its solution (four) is not only a curious commentary on the intellectual life of English convent society but also a fair indication of the author's patience with her materials. There are going to be no loose ends in *this* play. The actors are constantly asked to register shock and incredulity at developments which would be considered transparent on a Howdy Doody program, and I felt for them. Production-wise, they are also asked to play in a deliberate and somewhat grandiose style better suited to rhetorical tragedy. As I see it, realistic melodrama is a form to be underplayed, partly to increase the tension and partly to bypass easily the inevitable coincidences and logical absurdities inherent in the formula. Herman Shumlin has instead directed for accent. Though the very firmness of his method has a certain drive of its own, it winds up underlining the obvious, and everlastingly belaboring what is already labored. (*At the 48th St.*)

NOT FOR CHILDREN

ELMER RICE has confessed in the public prints that he could not quite say what his play, "Not for Children," was about, and, while no one has asked me, I want it made clear right now that I am with Mr. Rice one hundred per cent. It isn't that "Not for Children" is obscure. When you say that a play is obscure you mean that the author had a point to make but that he has tangled himself up in the process of making it. Mr. Rice seems not to have any point at all and to be deliberately entangling himself in order to conceal his poverty. "Not for Children" is both the idlest and the most self-indulgent play we have had for some time.

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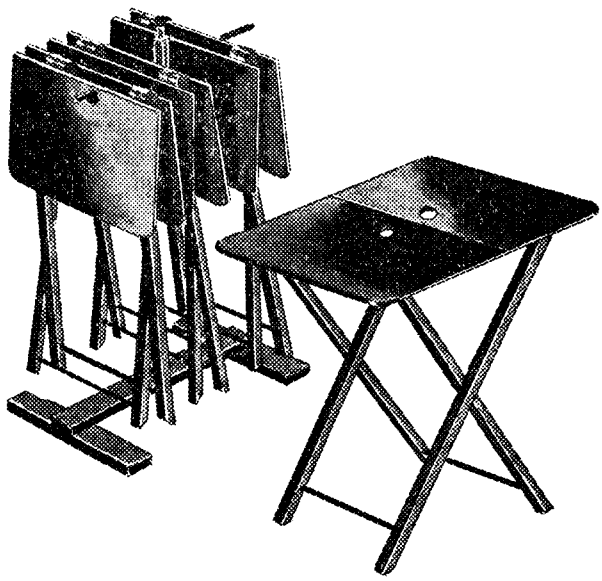

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I kept thinking, for at least half the first act, that there was going to be a point: that Rice wished to contrast the hopped-up and conventionalized reality of the theatre with the less clear but more moving reality of life itself. Or that he was going to invert the process and show life as essentially conventionalized and the theatre's artifice as substantially real. As a matter of fact, I don't remember *what* I thought he was going to show, but I did spend some time thinking, and it got me nowhere. I was more or less all right while Elliott Nugent and Betty Field were in front of the curtain chatting casually about the rightness or wrongness of dramatic principle. But every time I thought I had a lead on one or the other's point of view, the curtain would open on a little playlet presumably designed to illustrate that point of view, and the fat was in the fire. None of the playlets ever seemed to me to shed the least light on the discussion at hand, and only one of them—a very funny parody of "tough" literature—proved at all interesting in itself. After I had been betrayed in this manner three or four times, I finally stopped listening to the discussion as well—though not soon enough to avoid hearing a prolonged eulogy to the family bed which is going to win the 1951 Gaucherie Sweepstakes hands down—and spent the rest of the time wondering why Rice, who wrote this play long ago, should at last have chosen to produce it in the same season with a similar and similarly inept piece known as "A Story for a Sunday Evening." Rice is actually an adroit craftsman; what kind of masochism was this? (*Closed at the Coronet*)

RAZZLE DAZZLE

BY ANY objective standards I ever heard of, "Razzle Dazzle" is terrible. It is, however, presented Arena-style, and because you are right there on top of it, or because it is right there on top of you, you are finally so swallowed up by it—or so beaten down to its own simple-minded level, I don't know which—that you find yourself laughing at materials that you *know* aren't any good. I don't recall hearing this singular effect advanced as one of the virtues of theatre-in-the-round by its constantly multiplying apologists, but if they want to use it, I think they may have something. It might be called the virtue of stupefaction through proximity, or calculated trauma of the critical sense. Anyway, I wound up laughing, and if you quote me, I'll deny it.

Actually, theatre-in-the-round would seem a far from ideal production setting for a musical revue, which "Razzle Dazzle" purports to be. In the first place, of course, you lose the scenery, and it would be absurd to suppose that scenery is not an advantage in a revue. In the second place, you lose the special value of makeup. You still get the makeup—gobs and gobs of it—but it makes the girls look more glazed than attractive. And a still more serious casualty of the Arena musical is dance: you are in a position to see all of the mechanics and none of the line. As my wife pointed out during one of the more strenuous numbers, this is the art that reveals art.

With all these losses of illusion, it is remarkable that you are willing to stay long enough to be finally overwhelmed by whatever it is that overwhelms you. One reason you stay, of course, is that in the Arena theatre you *can't* get out; not, that is, without walking across the stage and running the risk of being kicked in the head by a witch-dancer. Certainly the other reason you hang on at "Razzle Dazzle" is a young lady named Dorothy Greener. Miss Greener is short, plain, and stringy-haired; she is also wonderful. Though some of her material is downright feeble and the rest of it distractingly uneven—when she is given three good lines you can be morally certain they will be capped by a disastrous fourth—the lights never go up on Miss Greener without her providing you with some little reward for your attention. She has the complacent authority of the real thing; she works quietly and confidently, and she killed me. (*Closed at the Edison*)

THE SMALL HOURS

MY WIFE, quoted above, must be more extensively quoted here. The flu got me, and I had to send her into the night alone, from whence she returned with the following report: For one who has the oldest established permanent floating crush on George S. Kaufman, it becomes rather an unpleasant chore to report on his latest play at the National. "The Small Hours," written in collaboration with Leueen McGrath, is the story of a woman who feels inferior to her husband, principally because she is never able to say the right thing. This fairly simple incapacity provides the basis for most of the play's twenty-six scenes, in which we see the lady successively saying the wrong thing to her butler, her maid, her husband, her children, her husband's chichi friends, and her own dowdy girl friend. As you may have suspected, she says the wrong thing once too often and drives her husband into the strong arms of a lady novelist. When the husband ultimately asks for a divorce, she succumbs to an attack of psychosomatic paralysis—a disease, if we are to believe Mr. John Crosby of the *Herald Tribune,* right now rampant among heroines of soap operas. Eventually it develops that the husband, although an intellectual and a reader of the letters of Voltaire, has nevertheless moments of insecurity himself, and on this basis he returns to his wife, who is still talking the way she did all along but presumably it's all right now.

It may be said on the credit side that the performances are remarkably stylish and, in the cases of Dorothy Stickney as the wife and Joan Wetmore as the sympathetic friend, even occasionally touching. The scenery—all of it—is by Donald Oenslager and is excellent; it should be noticed in passing that this may be the only play in theatrical history to have one setting for the front seat of an automobile and *another* for the back seat of an automobile. The dialogue is frequently amusing, although, for my money, there isn't as much grace or wit in the entire play as there was in Mr. Kaufman's little prior-to-opening piece in the Sunday *Times.* (*At the National*)

WALTER KERR.

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The Screen

BLACK AND WHITE

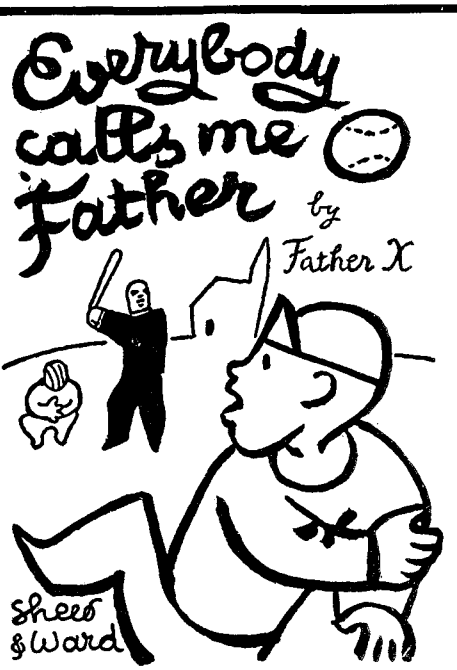
TOWARD the end of *"The 13th Letter,"* Charles Boyer, portraying an elderly doctor in a French-Canadian town, tosses off a little lecture on good and evil: to the effect that man is made up of both and that they can change places in him from time to time. Actually this whole film is an illustration of this argument; and while the idea is not exactly new, it is unusual for the theme of a Hollywood film, in most of which a villain is a villain and a hero a hero with the blacks lined up on one side and the whites on the other.

As a matter of fact I think Producer-Director Otto Preminger has handled this theme better than did the producer of the French film, "Le Corbeau," of which it is a remake. If you saw "The Raven" when it was released in this country in 1948, you will remember that it was as sinister and unhealthy a movie as was ever turned out. (It was made by the French during the Nazi Occupation and too easily provided fodder for Germans anxious to propagandize French decadence.)

The plot of the new version is practically the same as that of the original and shows how a town is thrown into turmoil by a series of anonymous letters. These vicious letters accuse various townsfolk of scandalous behavior and soon, because everyone begins to suspect everyone else, they turn friend against friend, relative against relative; and they lead to tragedy. Perhaps as a study in demoralization "The Raven" was more successful than "The 13th Letter." It was certainly more unpleasant and had much more bite; but because Director Henri-George Clouzot overemphasized the evil aspects, the audience had difficulty finding the good in this dual nature of man.

While Preminger effectively presents the malevolence that grows out of the situation brought on by the poison-pen letters, he also succeeds in making his people human and understandable. His cast is excellent: Charles Boyer as a French-Canadian doctor, Michael Rennie as an English doctor who left London under suspicious circumstances, both men now on the staff of the local hospital; Constance Smith as Boyer's young, pretty wife; Judith Evelyn as her spinsterish sister, a nurse; Linda Darnell as an unhappy cripple passionately in love with Rennie; June Hedin as her rather nasty teen-age sister who works in the post office; Françoise Rosay as the mother of a hospital-confined war hero whose suicide leads to a grim, ironical funeral scene; and a large supporting cast in small roles that add to the realism of the whole picture.

This realism is further heightened by the on-the-spot sets and backgrounds. Handsomely photographed in Quebec towns, "The 13th Letter" is more authentic in locale than in story. The script, written by Howard Koch from Louis Chavance's original, is frequently too busy working up an air of mystery in its effort to make



This is the jacket of our current best seller **EVERYBODY CALLS ME FATHER** ($2.25). As you may suspect, it's absolutely painless Lenten reading. . . . On March 28th we publish **Sister Madeleva's A LOST LANGUAGE and Other Essays on Chaucer** ($2.25). The language that has got lost isn't so much middle English as Chaucer's language of devotion. Being a Catholic gives Sister Madeleva an edge over most Chaucer critics, and being a nun gives her a very special understanding of his nuns. We dare say being a poet helps too. Anyhow, if you start the book with no affection for Chaucer, you will be in a better state by the time you finish it. **Father Gerald Vann's THE HIGH GREEN HILL** ($2.25) comes out the same day. This is a collection of essays on a variety of subjects—the Mass, the Theology of the Magnificat, the Apostolate of Satan (a frightening one), Confession and Health of Soul and so on—first class light spiritual reading—light to read, that is, not light because there isn't plenty of thought in it. **Gertrud von Le Fort's SONG AT THE SCAFFOLD** ($2.25) is the last of the reprints of favorite books we are doing this Spring. This short novel about the martyrdom of a convent of Carmelite nuns in the French revolution is, they tell us, the most popular of all her books in Germany. It's lucky we did so many reprints this Spring—there's another paper shortage coming up, heaven help us. **Robert Farren's SELECTED POEMS** ($2.50) comes out with this on March 21st. These are the poems Robert Farren likes best of all he has published so far, with a few new ones thrown in for good measure. You haven't forgotten to get the **Knox HOLY WEEK BOOK** ($2.50) have you? It's ready.

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The February-March Trumpet contains much more about all these books, the rest of our Spring list, the usual new and reprinted book reviews and extracts from books. Lucy MacGill will be glad to send it to you free and postpaid, if you just let her know you want it.

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each principal character seem guilty. Perhaps because of my familiarity with the story, I am too critical of the plot's mechanics. I doubt, however, if you come on this picture fresh, that you will guess the instigator of all the dirty work. And even if you do, the havoc caused by the letters is fascinating to watch—in a ghoulish sort of way.

★

IF YOUR tastes run more to lighter and funnier subjects, war for instance, there are three comedies now on our screens that derive their humor from various aspects of the call-to-arms situation. None of these pictures is really a world beater, but each has its funny moments which may appeal to all audiences and to service or ex-service men in particular.

As is typical when the movies take over a successful musical revue, they drop some of the best song numbers and add a plot about which no one really cares at all. *"Call Me Mister"* falls right in line with this scheme and tells a seemingly endless story about a sergeant in Japan (Dan Dailey) who meets up with his wife (Betty Grable), who is entertaining the boys in Japan but who refuses to have anything to do with Dan other than carry out her plans to divorce him. The story stresses Dan's irresponsibility to the point of becoming tiresome, but finally manages to reconcile the couple. In the meantime it exposes us to some good song-and-dance routines, some rather suggestive black-out numbers and a couple of very good items from the original show: Harold Rome's "Going Home Train" song and an extremely clever skit kidding the Air Corps. Danny Thomas is also on hand and provides most of the fun. You better be sure you're a Grable-Dailey fan if you go to this.

★

AND YOU better be sure you're a Martin-Lewis fan before you go to *"At War with the Army,"* a satire on life in a training camp. Actually the script, written by Fred Finklehoffe from the James Allardice play, is funny in itself; but it is Jerry Lewis' clowning and remarkable sense of mimicry that kept me in good humor and made the army gags, even the old ones, seem amusing. Dean Martin assists, of course, by singing and by being a most amiable straight-man for Jerry's spontaneous foolery. If you're familiar with Lewis' technique, you know that he goes in for a mixture of parody and surrealistic zaniness. Perhaps this is just the kind of ribbing the army needs, especially now. But need it or not, the army better prepare itself for more kidding. Hollywood has several other ribs on the fire.

★

THE NAVY is the recipient of a couple of well-aimed jabs too in a clever little item called *"U.S.S. Teakettle."* Stemming from John W. Hazard's article in *The New Yorker,* this comedy shows how some experiments with a subchaser were finally worked out by college-graduate officers (90-day wonders) and a

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crew most of whom were civilians just a short time ago. The only man who's really *Navy* aboard this ship is the chief boatswain's mate, played with just the right touches of disgust and understanding by Millard Mitchell. Although I'm growing tired of Gary Cooper's cute portrayal of the Great American Boy, it fits very well the role of the befuddled captain of this experimental ship.

Again and again the *Teakettle* (as the craft is known at the base where it is the butt of all jokes) goes out on trial-runs and fails. How its officers build up the crew's sinking morale and how these men make the experiment a success through their ability to improvise, furnishes hilarious comedy material. Jack Webb, Eddie Albert, Jane Greer, Richard Erdman, Harvey Lembeck and many others are in this good and funny cast. I suspect the humor will appeal more to men than to women, but anyone who enjoys a hearty laugh will find it in this comedy that is as unusual as the ship which gives it its title.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Of Note

Art and Morality

A NEW French monthly review, *Terre Humaine* (43, rue de Liège, Paris 8) is edited by Etienne Borne. In the February issue, Luc Estang writes on the subject of novelists and moral freedom. The following paragraphs are excerpted from his closing arguments.

> There is no "Christian Literature" in the sense that the moral censors would like. And there are no "Catholic novelists." Graham Greene writes that he prefers "novelists who are Catholics," and I support this terminology, which was also used by Péguy. . . . The novel should never abandon its own organic unity and get involved in apologetics. Yet I submit, as Greene has done elsewhere, that the work of a Bloy, a Bernanos, or a Mauriac shows that Catholicism may be in a novel as a kind of hidden element, *sui generis,* merely by virtue of the fact that the author, a Catholic, has created authentically.
>
> The Catholic novelist lays no claim to the right to be "gradually corrupted," but Newman thought knowledge of the process was useful. The novelist claims the freedom to describe this "slow corruption" if one of his characters is infected with it. Because this is honest. And also because it is useful in the world today to give back to sin its own name. There is something essentially different about the Christian novelist, separating him from his godless confrères; whatever the other differences, there is one important distinction between the Christian and the unbeliever: the Christian, who is called to grace, believes that sin exists. And it is useful for all Christians to see the world as it really is, not in order to run away from it but to save it.

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Koestler's Longing and Despair

By MAX FISCHER

MODERN novelists are generally afraid to incorporate the politics of their time in their stories. They have learned that this is a highly dangerous experiment. Like an ordinary man, the artist is chiefly influenced by his own personal interests and prejudices. It is easier for the novelist to set the political emotions of a bygone era in proper perspective than to put down a clear view of the politics of his own time.

It seems, then, an audacious thing for Arthur Koestler to plunge into the central political problems of our time in his new novel, his fifth, *The Age of Longing* (Macmillan, $3.50). No doubt he does so not with the idea of dealing with the problems of last year or of this year or of next year, but with the life and death problem of this decade, and he situates the action of his story in the middle fifties in order to present today's problems in a still more dynamic aspect.

The political struggle, of course, is between the so-called Communist and Democratic worlds. This is certainly not only a problem of power politics, but a fight over the structure of society, the freedom of the individual and the meaning of life. Koestler is convinced that in dealing with the Cold War between the two worlds he is not writing about ephemeral political realities but about the basis of future human existence.

Koestler, one of the most successful authors of our day, was born in Budapest, educated in Vienna and he worked for a time in Berlin on the editorial staff of a liberal newspaper. At the same time, he was keeping the Communist Party informed of the inside affairs of his publishing house. Koestler has told this story in the book *The God That Failed*. This frank confession is followed by an examination of his motives for being disappointed with the Party and for his subsequent break with it.

★

TO HIM, certainly, the choice between Stalinism and anti-Stalinism is not just a political matter, but a basic question of responsible existence in the world of our day. He has struggled a long time over the two possibilities and when he now makes the Cold War between the two worlds the topic of a novel, he does so with the knowledge of a man who has lived emotionally with both sides. Therefore to him this is a struggle far beyond *realpolitik*. If he were able to crystallize the whole meaning of this fact into his novel, it might indeed be one of the great books of our age.

He presumes that the fear of war and the antagonism between the two worlds will steadily increase, but that there will be no military action on a larger scale. Koestler leaves himself free, therefore, to talk about our current problems—in a world concerned with no basically new matters, despite some new weapons. The novel has very little of utopia about it; it remains in an atmosphere of circumstances and emotions that ask for no over-exertion of imagination from this year's readers.

Nor is this a novel written in black and white terms; it is not a story invented for propaganda purposes or malicious debunking. True, *The Age of Longing* is a novel of a skilled journalist and a philosophical essayist, and these qualities are much more in evidence than those of a creative poet. He describes the Paris of the mid-fifties with the analytical techniques a foreign correspondent or an historian might use for an impressionistic depicting of a milieu. For a novel which takes place in the future, this is not a bad technique, since it enables the reader to accept the imaginary happenings of the future as sober matters of fact.

The novel has a great amount of intellectual conversation in it which, however, doesn't really cover the scope of timely problems in such a full way as does, for example, *Wilhelm Meister* or *The Magic Mountain*. Everything is subordinated, in a very one-sided way, to the political struggle, while the problem of the transcendental, in our days especially a profound matter, does not enter the discussion. The conversations are thoughtful, often brilliant, occasionally even profound—but they are not discussions of an ultimately basic intensity. They are like conversations between persons of *esprit* in the literary coffee houses of Paris or like debates after a political lecture in some intellectual club. They don't serve to develop the characters to their full possibilities, as do, for instance, the metaphysical discussions in the novels of Dostoievsky. They do not achieve much more than a formulation of certain standpoints, certain trends and certain ways of reasoning characteristic of our complex and sceptical age.

★

IT IS KOESTLER'S aim not to create types, but individuals of flesh and blood. As far as this can be done with these analytic and intellectualized techniques, it is achieved. Of course, the creative limits of his artistic talents are more evident in this epic-like novel than in his earlier books dealing with more confined subjects. But it seems to me fair to say that the reader is given a view of the present world that has depth. Here he will find expressed modern over-activity and emptiness of soul, with its lack of faith and its longing for an absolute truth, with its sufferings and its joys, with its brilliant and its desperate features.

Sarcasm, irony and a distorting ridicule of a hostile world are certainly marks of Koestler's talent. But here Koestler's literary intention has caused him to withstand the temptation to write a partial novel in this sense. On

MAX FISCHER is a member of the faculty of The New School in New York, where he teaches literature and history.

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the contrary: he makes the most subtle efforts to explain the way of thinking of both the Communists and the fellow travelers. They are not presented as plain villains but as human—all-too-human—figures, partly consenting and partly rebelling when abused as puppets by the wire pullers of the totalitarian order. Nikitin, the Russian protagonist, is given a set of carefully-drawn motivations and many lovable features, while most figures of the Western world are characterized as having a morbid lack of vitality and a blunt unalertness. The purposefulness with which the representatives of the *Commonwealth of Freedom-loving People* (the Soviet Union and some satellites) are able to integrate everything into their design for world-expansion is contrasted with the faintheartedness of occidental men, who long to believe but have not absoluteness of faith. The defenders of Europe against the gigantic octopus of totalitarian propaganda appear "like a crowd of jaunty athletes who know that they are impotent. The more conscientious and sensitive they were, the more the knowledge of their impotence made them suffer, even to the point of affecting their physical countenance."

Since the scene of the novel is laid in the Western world, it is easier for Koestler to display its shortcomings. The anti-Communist world of Paris is paralyzed by fear, is cynical and without vision, is sex-ridden and torn by empty pleasures. The atmosphere of the French capital, with its great past and its hectic present, gives the impression that the heirs of French civilization are bled out, physically and spiritually; that they have no longer anything to offer to the spirit, only to the senses: "We can't hope for a new Jeanne d'Arc, not even for a young First Consul, not even for a Charlotte Corday. . . ." And it is in the same vein that one of these French decadents asks the Americans to give their nation a new revelation instead of canned peaches and anti-tank guns.

★

THE RESISTANCE of Western civilization as depicted by Koestler, does not look like a proud defense of deeply cherished values, but only a wild goose chase for a vanished world. There is, for example, a sort of helpless desperation in this secularized age, as represented by a materialistic American colonel who has only a faint notion of what the heart of the matter is: "When you get God out of your system, something goes wrong with your metabolism which makes the bug more virulent. If that is the case, then this plague must have started in the eighteenth century, or even earlier, and now it's just working up towards its peak. And if it's allowed to take its natural course, the ravages will be worse than those of the Black Death."

Thus the impression that this may not be merely a fight over power politics and economic principles, but a spiritual struggle, slowly breaks through; however, the reader may well be afraid that the awakening will be too late. There is "a draught blowing through the world as in an empty flat before the new tenants have arrived. . . ."

I guess the propagandists of the Kremlin will not be frightened by this new novel. They will claim that Koestler has painted the desolation of a dying world, that "the corruptness and morbidity of capitalist society" are evident to any critical reader. Though they will dislike the unveiling of the inhumanity of the Communists and their betrayal of human values, they will hold that the author is unable to put another faith against that of the Soviets.

And there might be even more than one grain of truth in such a reflection. Throughout this novel the figures of the Western world drift from one opinion to another like desperately sick people who consult one quack after another. The world of the Christian faith is touched upon in this book, but never discussed seriously. Hydie, the American girl who is the principal Western character, was educated in a convent school and experienced all the consolations of a burning faith, but then lost this faith. The author is not quite able to make this change of heart real and convincing.

Among the secondary figures there are some Catholics but they are treated with remarkable antipathy, as, for example, Father Millet, a man pure of heart but compromised by an impossible niece, and Jean Dupremont, "our leading pornographist and a recent convert to the Holy Church."

★

THIS quotation is characteristic of the author's pettiness, something that denies him the superiority of outlook needed to make such a timely novel into a really great book. He is distracted by picayune interests, by mischievousness, by bed stories of poor taste and he forgets much too easily that he is writing a story of paramount spiritual struggle. In spite of his own longing and his experience that Stalinism is unable to satisfy this longing, he seems to be himself one of the drifting sceptics whose morbidity he recognizes in such a lucid way. He is aware that only the power of faith is able to conquer Communist superstition, but while he debunks the Christian faith, he does not demonstrate the advent of a new faith. Thus the figures of this novel are menaced by the Scylla of Communist tyranny and the Charybdis of libertinistic aimlessness, with no way of salvation in sight. It is strange enough that in a book dealing with the longing of our age, the young generation plays no part. At least from their dreams and hopes the reader might gain a more confident perspective.

I presume that Koestler's novel is destined to be a best seller. The book is full of actuality, current problems, clever irony; it makes easy reading. It will be discussed in forums and women's clubs. It will even help to clarify many illusions about Soviet conditions and Soviet politics. But it is neither the definitive novel of the two worlds the author intended to write nor a light of guidance to the Western world showing us how to stop Moscow's expansion. It may survive as an interesting document of a changing time but certainly not as a milestone of twentieth-century literature.

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Books

Follow Me Ever. Charles E. Butler. Pantheon. $2.50.

ANYONE who used to read the pages of *Yank* thoroughly will recall the careful, poignant verse of Charles E. Butler. Before and since the *Yank* years he has published two collections of verse and has taken up nostalgic space in such magazines as *Poetry* and *Harper's.*

Now he gives us his first novel. Elizabeth Bowen has said that a novel is "the realistic expression of a poetic idea" and this dreamy, often lovely little book, concerning a spiritually and physically afflicted GI in England, is quite obviously the poetic expression of a realistic idea. For this reviewer, at least, Mr. Butler's present work is a poignant narrative poem, not without its episodic kinship to the novel.

The author uses the almost religious power of skillful, moving language to evoke and perpetuate the memory of a tragic GI named Ellis.

Ellis, a handsome, serious-minded Air Force Sergeant, is suddenly afflicted with the stigmata—hands, side and feet—while day-dreaming on his army bunk. He is understandably terror-stricken, goes a.w.o.l. and stumbles onto a quite wholesome lady of the night who consoles him much in the manner of Francis Thompson's woman of refuge. Later, he is apprehended by the M.P.'s and court-martialed. His C.O., a brutal Major, and a stuffy Flight Surgeon, will swallow none of this stigmata nonsense and order him shipped off to the infantry. All this despite the pleas of the Catholic chaplain and a courageous army nurse who has actually seen the wounds. To any one who has been a GI such "official action" is most convincing.

We learn that the possible spiritual significance of the wounds has been explained to the non-Catholic Ellis by a rather hesitant Catholic Chaplain who seems incapable of resisting the Major. Ellis, with very vague notions of St. Francis and Theresa Neumann, accepts the assignment to the infantry and is eventually killed in action.

BUTLER evokes his GI memories with power, depth, and an unerring feel for image and mood. But the vagueness of Ellis and the circumstances surrounding his affliction seem to reflect the vagueness of the author with regard to the stigmata and its holy, traditional meaning. Without deeper insight into Ellis and his background, without a more detailed analysis of the effect of such spiritual phenomena on the Catholic priest involved, one is inclined to conclude that the stigmata of Sergeant Ellis is more contrivance than mystery.

JOE DEVER.

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Art Making from Mexico to China. Jean Charlot. Sheed and Ward. $3.

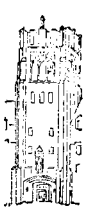
ONLY two decades ago the Mexican painters started invading the United States. First came Rivera, demonstrating how to enchant both Rockefeller and Ford by a publicity trombone, but meantime proclaiming to the faithful that the apocalypse of the proletariat was imminent. Today his overblown posters seem as tedious as the doctrine they represented. Also there came Orozco, boiling with fury against the Yankee colossus, though he, too, was not unwilling to accept his commissions at Dartmouth and elsewhere. These works still incarnate his indignation, even if they now do so more compellingly, perhaps, in terms of black-and-white rather than of color.

Intermittently there came a quieter man, one who neither cracked the ears by a slide-trombone nor exploded against the very people who had invited him here. This painter, Jean Charlot, has now submitted a book —incidentally, it is his second— wherein he records the best of his thought both as visitor-among-us and as an artist who can test any culture and still maintain his savoir-faire.

Almost half of his crisp little volume is devoted to Mexican subjects. He rambles from the Aztec pyramids to the scaffolds where his enthusiastic fellow-painters devised new murals in the twenties; he recalls half-forgotten technical innovators like Guerrero, who apparently gave Rivera many a recipe, and he properly celebrates popular print-makers such as Posada. Once, too, he returns to a neglected chamber where now the once-welcomed murals are threatened by dust and downright mistreatment. These pages finished, he turns to Indian work from our own country, to print-makers of the US, to Chinese ink-painting, to theories and siftings on abstraction and kindred problems. Always he speaks thoughtfully, if sometimes spinning out his impressions a bit too tenuously. Yet he leaves some residue by virtue of his very reserve, thus constituting himself an almost perfect ambassador.

As for his articles on liturgical arts, here he sometimes ignites a flaming epistle. He does not hesitate to chide an editor who refuses sufficient grace to the most exigent of the modern seekers-in-paint. He declares without equivocation his distaste for the sculpture of Eric Gill, whose work he regards as closer to letter-cutting than to modeling in the round. Thus again he fulfills his mission of clarifying where much order is needed.

It would accordingly be good to see his full-length ideas on Rouault, on the "art religieux" movement now burgeoning in France, on the projects of Father Couturier, on the Church at Assy, and on similar challenging topics. For these issues almost ache for a discussion from an artist-critic of M. Charlot's sensibility. Meanwhile, we can still be gratified that he has at last compiled many of his scattered writings into the present volume and afforded us a fresh appreciation of one artist who lasts better than some of his



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JEROME MELLQUIST.

The Telegraph. Stendhal. Translated by Louise Varese. New Directions. $3.50.

AMONG the more obvious reflections which this book, the second part of *Lucien Leuwen,* prompts is one that compares the days described in the story and the current times. The dishonesty of politics, the cupidity of politicians, the truckling of subordinates are described in these pages as confidently and as hopelessly as they are in daily newspapers. There is even repeated use of that word "venal" which has been quoted somewhat self-consciously in connection with recent police investigations.

But what is best in this book hasn't much relation to the present. The ability of Stendhal to produce a good, real piece of writing free of the contagion of "appeal" items but, nevertheless, concerned with contemporary morals, is apparent. The use of intelligent judgment and consequent recreation of character is pleasingly unfashionable. Effective, adult handling of satirical material differs substantially from the blunt, childish flow of satires on obvious themes which are now the vogue. There is, briefly, distinct evidence that the idea of a good book came before the idea of popularity and profit.

The novel deals, as many modern books do, with public evils. The title is derived from the use of the wireless by government officials to gain advantage in stock market operations. But, in addition to a knowledge of scandals and a familiarity with the language and details of a particular activity, there is the mark of a perceptive eye and mind. Perhaps the most pleasant reaction rises from the fact that satire of satire is not beyond Stendhal.

This story of a young man's entanglements in government service and a degenerate, hypocritical society is not remarkable for any depiction of overpowering, elemental emotions. It deals, rather, with the vocational motives, the personal attributes, and the secular stirrings which direct and form the man in his professional sphere—and which, of course, are the off-shoots of his nature and the cultivators of his complete life. And it does this with irony and mature wit.

Thanks are in order to the publishers of this edition, and, especially, to Louise Varese who has contributed another fine translation along with an admirable introduction and a pertinent set of notes. GEORGE MILES.

Everybody Calls Me Father. Father X. Sheed and Ward. $2.25.

SHEED and Ward's latest entry in the priests-are-people derby. It might have been written by Damon Runyon if he were a young parish priest who couldn't write very well. Somebody must have thought it would be a cute idea to have a priest talking like Sorrowful Jones, and maybe it is, but not good enough to sustain 180 pages of contrived "autobiography" that would strain the credulity of *Young Catholic Messenger* readers. Another reviewer has suggested that perhaps the explanation for these memoirs is that they *are* true. In either case Father X was wise to remain anonymous.

JOHN COGLEY.

• REVIEWERS •

JOE DEVER is a native of Boston now living in Colorado. His short-stories have appeared in many magazines, and *A Certain Widow,* his second novel, will be published in the spring.

JEROME MELLQUIST is the author of *Emergence of an American Art.* He is now living in Paris, doing special work in art-criticism.

GEORGE MILES, a graduate of Notre Dame, is a New York critic and reviewer.

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